



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS' MEETINGS FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL

ERNEST L. SAUL

State Normal School, Trenton, New Jersey
Formerly High School, Nutley, New Jersey

A principal's most important work is to improve the classroom instruction of his teachers. Any project which will increase the efficiency of the teaching force can best be presented at a teachers' meeting. In an effort to conduct teachers' meetings which should result in the improvement of the teaching staff, the writer had in mind several fundamental ideas about teachers' meetings. A few of these are mentioned.

1. A principal should be a leader in the meeting, but he should not forget that it is a teachers' meeting.

2. Teachers' meetings should be professional, and it is the function of the principal to make them so.

3. Monday afternoon is perhaps the best time for a teachers' meeting—never Friday. They should begin promptly, continue for a definite period, and close on time.

4. It is not well to make it compulsory for teachers to attend. If they are the kind who think they do not need suggestions, give them something to do—some educational problem to work out. As a rule, this will interest them sufficiently to attend the meetings.

5. A teachers' meeting should be a pleasant affair. There should be no scolding, and all criticism should be made impersonally and frankly.

6. A teachers' meeting is not the place to make announcements.

7. As far as possible, the program should be of interest to all teachers.

During the year we had eight strictly professional meetings which were held the first Monday of every month at half-past three. The months of September and June were excepted because of the numerous duties which devolve upon the faculty at the beginning and closing of school.

The following schedule of programs was planned for the year:

October—Marks

November—Class management

December—Study suggestions

January—The assignment

February—The question as a part of the recitation

March—Supervised study

April—Textbooks

May—Extra-curriculum activities

At a preliminary meeting held early in the school year we stated the aims for our future meetings and outlined the work for them. Two teachers were assigned to each topic. A few of the teachers objected on the ground that it meant too much work, that it always had been difficult for them to speak before a group, or that teachers' meetings were never interesting. However, the majority were interested, and some even seemed to be anxious to present their topics. In general, the teachers who were really enthusiastic about their school work and desired to improve were the teachers who took up this work whole-heartedly. Some of the naturally shy ones, on the other hand, were our very best teachers.

About three weeks before each meeting the two teachers who had charge of the session met with the principal and agreed upon a plan for presenting the subject. To prevent repetition in the discussion, the subject was divided into two phases. Each teacher concerned herself with the one assigned to her. To further the efficiency of our meetings we conformed as nearly as it was feasible to the following suggestions: keep the meeting rather formal; solicit pertinent questions; discourage prolonged general discussions. Each speaker was allotted twenty-five minutes for her discussion, and it was deemed more profitable to attend to that prepared discourse than to permit much general discussion.

An outline of the subject prepared by the principal was given to each of the two teachers. These outlines were not necessarily to be followed by the teachers, but it happened that in nearly every case they were followed more or less closely. A day or two previous to the meeting each teacher was given a similar outline and urged to bring it to the meeting. This afforded each teacher an oppor-

tunity to become somewhat familiar with the topic and possibly to prepare questions which she could present for discussion.

The outlines used had been collected from various sources: some were the result of projects taken up by certain classes in Teachers College; others were compiled from educational periodicals and books; some were borrowed from other schools and principals, while certain parts were original. The purpose of these outlines was to give suggestions in order to make it easier to follow the discussions and to cause the teachers to think about the problems with which they dealt.

With one or two exceptions the presentation of the subjects showed careful preparation. Teachers called at the office and libraries for more professional books than ever before. This awakened interest caused the school and library of the town to order more educational books and periodicals. Hitherto there had been no demand for such literature. One teacher made a study of his pupils in regard to the time spent in study, recreation, and idleness, both at home and at school. He brought the results before the teachers to show the advantages that might be derived from proper supervised study. In other ways practical applications were made to conditions in our own school. Occasionally, however, some questions were not satisfactorily answered; some could not be answered at all. Ten minutes were usually allotted to the principal at the close of the meeting. He used this time to comment on certain points of the discussion. This was his only responsibility in the meeting.

"Marks" was the first topic to be discussed. It was desirable to establish as uniform a system of grading as possible before the first six weeks' report was made out. One of the main objections to the marking of our pupils by the teachers was that it lacked uniformity. At this time we were using an old unequal group distribution with two grades, D and P, below the passing grade 70, and three, E, G, and M, above the passing grade. We were preparing to change to a distribution recommended by the Committee of Uniform Standards of Marking the Achievement of High School Pupils appointed by Dr. A. B. Meredith at a high-school conference in New Brunswick, New Jersey, in 1919. This

change came at the beginning of the school year. After the teachers had been informed at the teachers' meeting with regard to the new system, they adjusted themselves to it without any difficulty.

After studying this question a marked improvement was noted in the distribution of grades by the teachers. There was a much greater uniformity in marking, and fewer complaints came from pupils because of dissatisfaction with their grades.

At the second meeting, suggestions on "class management" were presented. There is a greater need for the study of this question among new high-school teachers than among new teachers in the grammar school because a majority of the latter have received such instruction in the normal schools, while many of the former have received no such instruction in their college courses. The teachers adopted many of the suggestions presented at this meeting.

The purpose in presenting "study suggestions" was to prepare the teacher for directing the habits of study of her pupils. Having studied the problem in a teachers' meeting, she was able to give valuable suggestions which would aid students in mastering their lessons. Later on, the home-room teachers were supplied with lists of suggestions for each pupil. In addition, forty-five minutes were given the teachers in which they might call attention to fundamental principles in effective study. The prime result of years spent in school is the knowledge of how to study.

In taking up the subject of "supervised study," we were not looking forward to the immediate adoption of any particular form. This question was studied to impress upon the minds of the teachers the fact that supervised study is simply an elaborate assignment or a co-operative assignment. As has been said, many teachers were taking great care in making their assignments. Thus the pupils were able to grasp the content of their work and to carry it to its conclusion. An algebra teacher, by supervising a twenty minutes' study of the next day's lesson, was able to accomplish not only a greater amount of work but also more intelligent work than ever before.

We have no assurance that the newest textbook is the best. Many of them are very unteachable and ill adapted to the needs

of the school. New teachers through their lack of experience are inclined to seize the latest publication as the necessary equipment for good teaching. We chose to discuss "textbooks" just before the time to make requisitions for books for the next year. A teacher should have a very good reason for ordering a new book, and this reason should be written and sent with the requisition.

Teachers too frequently do not appreciate the value of extra-curriculum activities. They fail to get the proper perspective of the work of the school. Hence they contend that such activities encroach upon school work and divert the pupils' attention from study. Our study of "extra-curriculum activities" suggested the advisability of striving for a commonly approved end. This end was to reveal higher types of activity and make these types both desired and possible.

The outlines of two of our programs are given as representative of the type used.

MARKS

1. What shall we mark? Achievement or ability to do. We often make our marking inexact by including other things in our mark.

2. Shall we also mark other traits; for example, improvement, ability, and effort? It is well to do this, but these qualities should be given separate marks. In some schools, marks are now given for preparation, recitations, and written work, as well as for dependability, self-control, personal neatness, and community spirit.

3. How many steps shall be indicated? Not more than can be consistently distinguished by the great majority of teachers. As many as are needed to serve the purpose of marking. Five are probably sufficient: one each for failure, unsatisfactory work, satisfactory, good, and highly superior.

4. What distribution shall be used and how large is each expected to be? A normal distribution, in which approximately as many receive the highest mark as fail, as many the second as the next lowest, with the bulk in the middle group.

5. What percentage of pupils should fall in each group? Roughly, 2 to 10 per cent in the extreme groups and 40 to 60 per cent in the middle group, leaving about 20 per cent for the two groups next to the extremes, where a five-division system is used.

6. How can teachers best approximate this distribution? By first ranking the pupils in order of merit before marking them. The Missouri plan is to have the teachers decide what percentage should be used. This is mechanical.

7. What symbols should be used? Symbols which are not already closely connected with traditional notions and which do not immediately suggest a single word. It is better to use symbols which you have the privilege to define.

8. What should the symbols indicate? The symbols should indicate qualities of achievement that are carefully and fully defined. Standards in scales should be used when possible. Have an objective statement of the grades: 4 per cent credit for method, 6 per cent for correct answer, etc.

9. What weighting should be given to daily and examination marks? The final marks should indicate what a pupil can do—not what he has been able to do. Possibly two-thirds to daily marks and one-third to examination marks.

10. Are written examinations desirable or undesirable? Chancellor condemns them because: (1) They are not suited to any entire group, since some people are auditory-minded, visual-minded, etc. (2) Some can write much more rapidly than others. (3) In choosing an orator, salesman, or wife, we wouldn't think of giving a written examination. (4) We should use directly our own eyes and ears upon the very persons themselves who are to be graded and promoted. (5) Common experience as well as medical science assures us that the long written examination is a crime against the health of most girls and many boys. However, there is very little value in teaching anything that is not retained.

11. Is the exemption system worth while? If the exemption system prejudices the teachers in favor of high grades, it should be discarded. If, on the other hand, it has no influence upon the grading of the teacher but tends to elevate the standard of pupils' work, its use should be extended.

A study was made in a high school during six years—two years before the system of exemptions was used, two years during its use, and two years after discarding the system. Teachers who had intimate knowledge of the quantity of study done prior to and during this exemption period agreed that there was an appreciable increase. For a period of three years, test records of study-habits were made yearly. These did not indicate any decrease in the amount of study subsequent to the abolition of the system. On the contrary, pupils were devoting more time to study under the new plan than they did while the exemption system was in force.

High-school teachers are naturally desirous of receiving suggestions along the lines of proper classroom management, for certain phases of this, in many instances, are the greatest problems for high-school teachers. The following outline is the one used in the meeting on this topic:

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS ON CLASS MANAGEMENT

A. Physical conditions of the room.

1. Keep everything neat and clean. (Blackboards, desks, table, teacher's desk, floor, etc.)
2. Have seats adjusted to pupils.
3. Watch carefully the ventilating and heating: have plenty of fresh air and keep the temperature at about 68° F.
4. Adjust the shades so as to insure proper lighting.
5. Keep the room as attractive and cheerful as possible through the use of pictures, casts, plants, ferns, etc.

B. Classroom routine.

1. Be absolutely punctual in beginning and closing.
2. Have a seating plan. Do not waste time in calling the roll.
3. Have all materials ready and easily accessible whenever needed; economize time in distributing and collecting.
4. Keep records carefully. Class marks should be recorded as soon as possible but not during the class recitation.
5. Be punctilious in sending in the various reports asked for by the office.

C. Conduct of class—not methods of teaching.

1. Be a guide and leader of the class in its pursuit of a definite aim.
2. Furnish stimuli for co-operation, interest, and activity; a busy class has no time for disorder.
3. Get the pupil's point of view; impress him with the fact that you are his friend. Never hold past record up against him in class.
4. Try to have each pupil feel that as a member of the group he is responsible for good order. Lead him to appreciate the value of self-control.
5. Have a sense of humor; be cheerful; smile and laugh if the occasion justifies.
6. Do not be temperamental; let the class find you always the same.
7. Refrain from sarcasm, ridicule, and nagging.
8. Cultivate a courteous, well-modulated tone of voice and require the same from your pupils.
9. Do not threaten.
10. Do not dodge discipline cases; handle them with vigor and dispatch. Too frequent recourse to the office weakens authority.
11. Do not make a discipline issue out of every trifling delinquency. Remember your school days and be wise in discrimination.
12. Have as few rules as possible. The machinery for maintaining order should not be too much in evidence.